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A
Tragedy in Whiskers



... by ...
CAESAR DAVIS




"Shave," said he.





A Tragedy in Whiskers

—By— *Davis, Harold Thayer*
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Author of "THE FINE ART OF PUNNING."



Illustrated by
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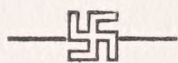


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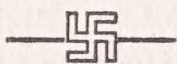
No. 1

Co. F. R. 1918.



TO DAD,

*The memory of whose marvelous yarns is
responsible for the present tale,
this slight tribute is dedicated.*



*****A Tragedy in Whiskers

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I.

A stray fly, volplaning to the features that constituted Jeffry Furlong's face, might easily have imagined itself in an African jungle. A nose that thrust itself through the black tangle like the summit of Mount Atlas, two lake-like eyes bordering upon a bleak Sahara of forehead and a mouth that rumbled at times like a wood-fringed crater, supplied the insect traveler with remarkable evidence for such belief. A safety razor in that extensive verdure would have resembled a cross-cut saw in a logging camp or a lawn mower in Kansas. All of which is merely to emphasize the fact that Furlong had wilfully concealed his identity behind a mask of black beard and by this act had leased himself to the gods.

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Furlong had spent the forenoon swimming and his shaggy locks dripped with moisture like a thatched roof after a thaw. The principal deficiencies in his wardrobe were a coat and hat, although numerous rents in his outer garments proclaimed that visits to the tailor were as frequent with him as social calls between King George and the Kaiser.

In this precarious state, tragedy had come upon him. During the brief interval between his trip to the lake and his return he had become as homeless as an Esquimau in Java. His cabin under the persuasive influence of fire had changed to a mass of smoking ruins and with it had gone also his credentials and his money.

Furlong gazed apprehensively at the darkening sky. The wind whispered suggestively through the thick

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network of trees that arched above him. A low roll of thunder fell as pleasantly upon his ears as the voice of babyhood—at one A. M. Five miles from a railroad, penniless, hungry, and worst of all, in danger of an unneeded shower bath—these were the elements of tragedy.

“By golly, yer house burned down, didn’t it?” asked a voice behind him. Furlong whirled around in amazement to confront a dilapidated specimen of the world’s best argument for woman’s suffrage.

For a moment he surveyed the stranger with a cold glance of disapproval and then replied:—

“Oh, no. Not at all. It didn’t burn down; it burned up.”

To those sensitive souls to whom any form of punning is as disturbing as cayenne pepper to a man of scents,

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this rebuff would have been sufficient. But Jelico Saunders was not of these.

"Then you must be broke?" persisted Jelico.

"By no means, good friend," replied Furlong. "You labor under a misapprehension. If I had a balloon, I could immediately raise some money, if I had some money."

For a moment the tramp considered this statement. Then a thought struck him.

"Aw, come on," he said. "You may be loco, pard; but we have need of that foliage of yours. You know Clipperville?"

"I was born there."

"And the razor factory that has made Clipperville famous?"

"I own it," replied Furlong truthfully.

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“Oh, of course you do,” said Jelico soothingly. “Of course you do. The owner dropped out o’ sight six months ago.”

“Yes, it has been six months. You are right. Six months ago I was scorned, sir, scorned by a woman; yes, by a beautiful woman, and I have registered a vow in heaven never to shave again until that time when the canker has been rooted from my heart.”

A great drop of rain, as if a tear from Jove, struck the ridge of Furlong’s nose and disappeared like a mountain stream in the network of shrubbery above his mouth. The oratory ceased with the abruptness of a pacifist’s speech in Germany and both men cast anxious glances at the darkening sky.

“I don’t know what yer game is, pard,” said Jelico; “but you can’t stay

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here and there's bunches of good ol' U. S. lettuce to be picked in Clipperville now. A strike's been called in the razor factory and there's need of such as us before the soldier boys come in t' spoil the game. In two hours a freight stops at the siding over the hill; in three hours we'll be at home. That map of yours will match the geography like a wooden leg fits a Pole. Is it thumbs up, pard?"

The sharp hiss of a burning stick as a drop of rain fell upon it, decided Furlong. Realizing that a penniless man of his appearance is apt to be as friendless as a pork chop on a vegetarian picnic, Furlong decided to make a hasty connection with private resources in Clipperville. Had this decision failed, his personal interest as the owner, despite appearances, of the Furlong Razor Factory would have argued loudly for a change of scene.

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Late that afternoon a freight train clattered over the switches in the yards of Clipperville and came to a jerky stop. A pair of legs were pushed cautiously from the side door of a hobo "Pullman" and produced oratory on the outside. "Well, well, if it isn't Jelico, again. A nice bath and a shave awaits you at the old homestead, my boy, even if you did leave in a hurry last time." Jelico had met a friend.

Furlong crouched fearfully in the dark shadows of the car. A red head and a blue helmet were thrust through the doorway, but the piercing eyes of the detective were baffled.

"Just an old hair mattress is all I find," said he.

When the train slowed down for a switch a half mile out of town, Furlong ventured once more to seek his freedom and this time swung unnoticed to the hard cinders of the right of way.

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His journey so far had taken time and the shadows were commencing to straggle their grotesque and gigantic lengths to the east. The rain had ceased and that ineffable calm of late afternoon—city residents please omit—had fallen upon Clipperville when Furlong, footsore and weary, arrived in his native city and thought with sorrow and apprehension of the future.

In civilization that hobby which he had cherished as a hermit might become a menace to his safety. He whom the average congressman would look upon with envy must slink down deserted alleys until the welcome artists of the tonsorial parlors should cut away the weeping willows upon his features and destroy the disguise that barred him from friends and fireside.

With a sigh of satisfaction Furlong slipped through the entrance of the

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Golden Shears Barber Shop and settled himself comfortably in the cushions of the chair beside the window.

“Shave,” said he.

It is a pleasure for us to relate that the artist of the blade was a man of strong constitution, because it is not a pleasant task for an author to hang crape upon the door of any man’s place of business. It must be admitted, however, that the young man was startled and Fido, the shop dog, made a dive for something on the floor as the scissors slipped in the hands of a fellow barber at the next chair.

“Say, what are you giving us?” asked the barber in the kindly patois of his kind. “We don’t do landscape gardening here. This is a barber shop.”

Furlong was piqued. The sudden ire of dignity offended swelled up in his breast and blossomed.

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"I'm not hunting for sketches for a funny paper," he said. "Bring out your lawn mower and start the harvest."

The barber in the meantime had been scrutinizing the wardrobe of Furlong and evidently found much to be desired. A task of this magnitude was not to be undertaken on credit.

"Don't get excited, stranger," said he. "Let me see the color of your coin and we'll let a little daylight on your face."

Furlong obligingly explored the depths of his trousers' pocket and then glanced up at the menacing face of the barber with horror and surprise. He remembered that the burning cabin had left him in a financial condition not more hopeful than that of Father Adam.

The barber sensed the difficulty and

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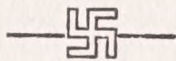
with a crook of his finger summoned a dark figure from the vicinity of the shoe-shining parlor.

“But I’m Jeffry Furlong,” shouted the enraged manufacturer recognizing the cruel hand of fate. “Tomorrow I’ll pay you five dollars for the shave.”

The barber grinned.

“Ha! That’s a good one; Jeffy Furlong with an acre of underbrush like that? Charlie, the job’s yours.”

“Yas, suh,” said Charlie exhibiting a set of teeth that looked like marble tombstones against a midnight sky.



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II.

For a few moments Furlong studied astronomy, enjoying the sensation of investigating a solar system all his own. Then he sat up. A crowd of curious spectators had gathered about to express opinions, so Furlong, fearing the results of such publicity, limped off down the street.

One idea had seized upon him. His lost identity must be restored. He jumped like a startled deer when a passer-by, indicating a newsboy on the corner, commented upon "the little shaver." He leaned for a moment over the pickets of a fence and contemplated a man who was mowing a lawn. With eyes that broke the tenth commandment he gazed upon the grass that poured in a verdant shower from behind the busy knives of the mower. A

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wisp of thin wood that fluttered down from a scaffolding where several carpenters were busy, showed that even the planes were shaving.

A few squares down the street new inspiration came to him in the gilt letters of the sign across the way:—"Joe Cuttemup, the Tailor." Deliverance was at hand.

Furlong glanced furtively through the windows of the shop. For the moment it was empty. A large pair of shears sprawled their awkward length across the table. To possess those matchless blades for half an hour became an obsession. He had never practiced the art of burglary before and felt like a novice pushing the pedals of his new car for the first time. But at last desire overcame his fear, so rushing boldly into the shop, he clutched the coveted objects upon the table.

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Then fate again grinned and pushed the button for the porter. A door in the rear swung back and a man and a loud shout emerged simultaneously through the opening. There was no time for thought, so Furlong, with the laudable intention of obeying nature's first law, dropped the coveted shears and sped like a hunted thing down the street.

Then the full horror of the situation burst upon him. He was marooned—marooned in a sea of whiskers—cut off from association with his friends by a sea as pitiless as that which washed the sands of Crusoe's island.

However, one gleam of hope remained. He could at least seek the dwelling he had once called home and there, if Nora, the housekeeper, was still faithful to her duty, he might at last escape from the disguise that, like

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a Sargasso sea, held his derelict destiny in its grisly tangle.

The shadows of the afternoon had reached their maximum length and were darkening into dusk when Furlong, creeping into the yard about his home, cautiously mounted the front steps and tried the door. It was locked.

“Confound Nora’s idea of burglars,” growled Furlong crawling over the porch railing. “You’d think this house was the four hundred; it’s so hard to get into.”

With these mutterings, the razor-maker, keeping to the shadows, stole softly around the side of the house and tried the back-door. It opened easily and Furlong crept into the darkness of the kitchen. The lights had not yet been turned on—thanks to the thrift of Nora—so Furlong paused for a moment in the shadow of the kitchen range.

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He was not left long in doubt. A wraith of fury suddenly materialized from the doorway opposite and a broom descended with crushing violence upon Furlong's head. Only the thick mattress that protected his dome of thought prevented a tragedy that would have ended our tale with an obituary and a tombstone.

"Take that, ye murtherin' spalpeen," cried the valiant Nora wielding her protective besom with an energy that made explanation futile. "Ye will come a sneakin' into a person's house without knockin', will ye? I'll learn the likes of ye to quit yer prowlin' in the daytime, ye blitherin' anarchist. Ye'll be frightenin' women and childer, will ye? Take that, an' that, an' that."

These various "thats" descended with the precision and force of pile-

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driver blows upon the body of the unhappy Furlong and after an exceedingly brief attempt to establish a conversation, the razor-maker with a cry of anguish turned and fled. His last refuge had disappeared like a sack of sugar in the rain.

A few moments later, while Furlong was taking stock of his various bruises, his eye was attracted by a glaring poster on a building across the street. Although badly shaken by the enormity of the disaster that had come upon him, Furlong limped across the street and like a deer, fascinated to its destruction by the decoy fires of the hunter, feasted his eyes upon the deadly poster.

“\$500 REWARD!

IVAN MIKHAILOVITCH, escaped Anarchist, is wanted for the crimes of murder, arson, and kidnapping. Five

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hundred dollars reward will be paid for his apprehension. When last seen Mikhailovitch was clothed in a ragged black suit and wore a heavy growth of whiskers. He is 30 years old, possesses an excellent education, and speaks English perfectly.

“Wire information to Sheriff J. J. Johnson.”

A cold chill clutched at the heart of Furlong. He glanced fearfully around him and then stood rigid with despair. Two blocks down the street appeared a galloping team which he recognized only too well. He had been the first alderman on the town council to insist that Clipperville's dignity demanded the purchase of a real metropolitan police patrol. It was now evident that he, the much kicked football on Fate's gridiron, was to become the victim of a boomerang.

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Furlong, galvanized to action by the staccato clang of the approaching bell, glanced wildly about. A local guardian of the law, leaning against a lamp-post on the next corner, gazed thoughtfully at a cloud and whirled his night stick in a suggestive manner. Furlong had feelings quite similar to those of an apple beside a cider press or the dreams of a man asleep in a folding bed.

Then inspiration came upon him. The house across the street was the very one from whose door he had emerged six months before with thoughts of poison and a cool, deep-flowing current. How well he remembered the scorn that had poured from the lovely lips of the adorable Janet when she had accused him of perfidy which he had neither committed nor understood. The tears that she had shed at the end of the denunciation had

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fallen like a gentle shower upon a scorched landscape and remained the only soothing memory of that unpleasant occasion.

Two overpowering desires prompted Furlong's next actions. He longed for escape with the longing of a botany professor for a rare beetle and desired with the desire of a hypochondriac for a new symptom, to feast his eyes once more upon the impossible object of his adoration. Time, like a tailor at his trade, was pressing, so Furlong, without further ado, rushed into the yard surrounding the home of the fair Janet, mounted the steps and opened the door.

"Oh, you have come at last," said a silvery voice and Furlong's heart, like a novice at music, skipped a beat or two.

"Janet," cried Furlong noticing the

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“Hush,” commanded the girl in a whisper. “Do you want everybody to hear?”

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dim outlines of a white figure in the hall.

“Hush,” commanded the girl in a whisper. “Do you want everybody to hear. I know your danger and will help you.”

At this amazing information, Furlong opened his mouth, but said nothing. Either he was the victim of a queer coincidence or some sinister plot was commencing to close upon him. He recalled the startling resemblance between Ivan, the anarchist, and himself.

“Come with me,” said the girl and led him through deserted rooms to the back of the house. “If you value your safety you must obey instructions. The police are searching everywhere and only careful concealment can save you. Here; this paper contains the directions that you must follow.”

With these mysterious words the

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girl thrust a paper into the hands of Furlong, opened the back door and indicated with a motion of her head that the interview was over. Furlong was too dazed by the strange adventure into which he had fallen to speak and in a moment found himself alone in the shadows of the porch contemplating a closed door.



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III

“Did somebody mention the mysteries of a Chinese stew?” commented Furlong to himself, pulling reflectively at the unwelcome adornment on his chin. “I’d give half my chances for a shave to know just what tune I’m supposed to be playing in this band.”

Furlong crept cautiously through the backyard to the alley and there, availing himself of the dim light which penetrated from an arc lamp on the corner, read with the perplexity of a Hottentot learning dominos, the following note.

“Your danger is pressing. If you would escape the coils that are tightening about you, go at once to the deserted house between the railroad and the fair grounds and remain there until

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summoned. All will yet be well.
Janet”

“I’d have better luck looking for a train in a time table than trying to explain this,” mused Furlong examining the manuscript closer. “Well, if I want to satisfy my curiosity in the matter, I’ll have to find the house. Here goes for the rest of the adventure.”

An hour later Furlong, having skillfully avoided the wide-spread net of the law, crept cautiously up to the deserted house and reconnoitered. The old mansion stood revealed in the light of the rising moon like the ghost of a forgotten thought. A slight wind had arisen and rattled a broken board hanging from the eaves. The dismal sound seemed almost like the groan from an aching tooth.

Furlong, unlike pancake batter, was not to be easily stirred, so having as-

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sured himself that all was well he advanced boldly and tried the door. The lock had rusted away through disuse and made the entrance into the dwelling a matter of small difficulty.

“This is not the pleasantest place in the world,” muttered Furlong to himself as he paused to listen. “Thought I heard something. Probably only a rat. I say, if this darkness were only light, it would make the sun look like a Christmas candle in a calcium spot.”

Meditating thus, Furlong continued his groping exploration of the interior and finally stumbled over an article of furniture that resembled a couch.

“King Arthur couldn’t have spent a more thrilling time in Chicago on a New Year’s eve than this little razor king’s had today,” said Furlong stretching himself luxuriously upon the

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couch, "so here's to a quiet snooze. I guess the day's work is over for me."

The razor-maker had apparently come to a cul-de-sac in a long and crooked road and other cares could be postponed till the morrow. In a few moments a strange, harsh, long-drawn-out sound mingled with the sougling of the wind about the eaves. Furlong snored and the wisps of beard swayed like reeds in a gale as his breath moved among them in soothing rhythm.

It must have been close upon twelve o'clock when Furlong awoke. He was conscious of a choking feeling in his throat and his breath seemed somehow to be struggling with a thick and oppressive air. He became wide awake at once, aroused himself, and sniffed. His first impressions could no longer be denied. The house was full of smoke.

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Suddenly a shrill cry arose on the startled air.

“Fire! Fire!”

Furlong now realized that fate had dealt another card in the perplexing game in which he seemed to be the jackpot. A sudden feeling, prompted perhaps by a sixth sense, impressed Furlong that all was not well. The sudden cry following so quickly upon his discovery of the smoke suggested some subtle connection between them. The odd coincidences that had been dogging his heels made him wary and he determined to act with caution.

“This smoke doesn’t seem to be too thick,” he muttered getting to his feet. “I’ll just sneak up stairs and if worse comes to worst I won’t need a parachute to come down over the porch.”

Heedless of the danger that might have made a man of tallow pause, Fur-

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long briskly climbed the creaking stairs of the old house and sought a front room where he might have a good view of all that should take place. The moon had by this time climbed to a dizzy height and flooded the landscape with mellow radiance.

He did not have long to wait. Smoke was rolling forth in heavy clouds from somewhere in the rear of the dwelling and in the distance an alarm-bell commenced to clang its warning. Suddenly he heard a heavy jar as if a door below him had been slammed shut and the next moment a strange figure emerged into the moonlight from the shadows of the porch. Furlong grasped the ledge of the window and breathed hard. His thoughts were not far distant from those of a monkey when he looks into a mirror for the first time. The stranger who stood like a trapped wolf in the moonlight, may in the days of his

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childhood have had features different from those of Furlong, but these slight differences were now hidden by that intensive verdure which makes all landscapes seem as one.

“The anarchist,” said Furlong softly. “A certain five hundred dollars will change hands tomorrow. Speaking of botany, this is certainly a first rate plant.”

Furlong in these deductions showed a remarkable ability to reason, for scarcely had he exchanged these views with himself when two men emerged from the shadows and advanced upon their dismayed and unhappy victim.

“Well, well; if here isn’t old Ivan again,” said one of the men cheerfully. His companion grunted an unintelligible reply and, closing in rapidly upon the poor anarchist, clamped a couple of irons upon his wrists.

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The struggle was brief. A loud cry of rage, a little dust, and silence settled once more upon the world.

“Exit Ivan,” said Furlong after his surprise had somewhat abated at this unusual occurrence. “The fire also seems to be going out. Ah, there comes the chemical wagon, so perhaps I’d better leave too.”

Furlong no longer possessed a desire to explore into the secrets of the deserted house and had even a less inclination to be discovered in its unwelcome vicinity. Acting upon the impulse of the moment, he made his way hastily through the deserted rooms to the rear of the dwelling and swung to the earth upon a ladder of vines which climbed over the back porch in a tangle second only to that upon his face.

A small wooded tract stretched for some distance back of the house and

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there, sheltered from the radiance of the moon and watchful eyes, Furlong once more resumed his rest and nasal music.

When Furlong awoke he became immediately aware of voices and, in that dim consciousness of his waking brain, he sensed that in some manner he was the object of the conversation.

“He’s the same old Pete with the same old asparagus bed upon his phiz,” said a gruff voice. “The boss’ll be as pleased as a man with a cured boil when he learns that Pete didn’t take time to shave.”

“And ain’t he dressed in style,” commented a second and even huskier voice. “Won’t Pete make the frothin’ maniac when we clamp his little bracelets on again.”

Furlong, amazed at the strangeness

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of this conversation, opened his eyes and sat up.

“Grab him, Bill; he’s a reg’lar devil on a Sunday School picnic,” yelled the first speaker advancing in a none too gentle manner. “Lively now with them shackles.”

Bill did not appear heedless of the warning and in a moment Furlong saw with unspeakable dismay that he was trussed up with irons that would have baffled a handcuff king.

“What is the idea? What do you think you are doing? This joke has just about gone the limit,” said Furlong angrily, making an attempted blow at Bill which resulted only in throwing his own body to the ground.

“Now ain’t he up to his old tricks again, Jim?” said Bill with a broad grin. “We’re sorry fer you, Pete, but

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yer contract with the boss ain't finished yet."

"Contract," bellowed Furlong, now thoroughly aroused by his fall and the ignominy that had been placed upon him. "When I get these instruments off my hands I'll make you two contract so you'll think you're mercury at the north pole. Who do you think I am?"

"There, there, Pete," said Jim soothingly. "You'd better save yerself fer yer work. The boss'll be so plumb tickled to see you back again that he'll pretty near raise our pay."

Furlong had always been averse to profanity in its various forms, but he now gave a wonderful exhibition of the symphony that the human voice can play on the organ of bad language. He did it with fervor and eloquence, expressing shades of meaning that would

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have called speed from mule teams on the deserts of Arizona and admiration from Mark Twain. He included his two captors and their unknown chief in a denunciation that would have made a riveting machine sound like a dumb man's speech in a congress of boiler makers. Jim and Bill heard the oration to its end with unfeigned admiration and sighed with regret when he touched off the set piece with a flare of lurid language that rivaled the Northern lights.

"Pete orter take up religion," said Jim after a short pause. "If he'd turn that sixteen incher loose against the devil, they'd soon be leasing some well known tropics to an ice company."

"He's sure added to his vocabulary," admitted Bill with a grin of appreciation. "But we'd better jog along if we want to get home fer breakfast."

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There was no hope for it. Furlong had emptied the vials of his wrath and had been met with grins. When he protested that he was the famous owner of the Furlong Razor Factory his captors had commented facetiously upon his choice of boycotts and roared with laughter. It was evident that his amazing disguise had once more directed him into a case of mistaken identity.

While Furlong was endeavoring to impress the vileness of their mistake upon his captors, the three had set off cross-lots towards the town and in a short time came in sight of a number of large tents. Furlong with growing fear read a huge sign that arched the road.

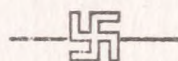
“Main Entrance to Morton’s Side Shows.”

A short distance further on his horrified eyes read the blatant canvas

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that shrieked his own disgrace to the gaping world.

“Peter Grumbo, the Wild Man.
Caught by a Steel Trap in the Jungles
of Borneo. He Eats Raw Meat”



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IV

Behind the steel bars of his cage Furlong clanked his iron chains and raged. A mad fury had seized upon him when his captors used his sun-tanned skin for a canvass upon which to spread wild and grotesque paintings. With a fiery oratory that seemed to turn his mouth into a verbal volcano, Furlong pointed out that the lack of frescoing upon his body argued with golden eloquence the case of mistaken identity.

“That ain’t no alibi, Pete,” said Jim, examining over the tip of his vermillion-tinted brush the monstrosity on Furlong’s breast. “These pictures don’t last like tattoo when it comes to moisture and that louse jungle looks like it had been out in the rain. Better cool off them words, Pete, or you’ll start a forest fire.”

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When Furlong was first presented to the gaping crowds as the escaped wild man he had made a little speech in which he set forth his identity with the razor king. The utter ludicrousness of the declaration had set the mob roaring with laughter and when Furlong finally burst into a torrent of wrath and attempted to break the steel bars of his cage, he became the center of an attraction that aroused the jealousy of the other freaks. Furlong had succeeded in his new career. Greater satisfaction could not have been given had he chewed up bits of soap and exuded foam from between his shaggy chops.

One day, a short time after Furlong had assumed his duties in the new profession, the razor-maker noticed a small, round-faced individual regarding him with meditative gaze. After a long and careful scrutiny from several

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angles the little man opened the conversation.

“Been here long, Mr. Grumbo?”

“Mr. Grumbo” sensed with frenzied cunning that here perchance was opportunity. With the desperation of a potato bug in a poison spray, Furlong poured forth the pitiful tale of which he was the luckless hero. He painted in lurid language the horrors of his incarceration and the proud estate from which he had so strangely fallen. Like a gentle shower upon a cabbage patch, it produced fruit.

“Just a moment, Mr. Grumbo,” said the stranger interrupting the flow of language. “Before we can get down to business, you must imitate me.”

The little man grasped his hair firmly in both hands and Furlong, wondering, did the same.

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"Now; one, two, three, pull," said the stranger.

Furlong obeyed with an effort that almost lifted him off his feet and the stranger smiled with satisfaction.

"It's real, all right," he said pleasantly. "Now, Mr. Grumbo, if I bail you out of your present occupation, will you sign a contract to remain in my employ for three months; wages five dollars per day; work nothing?"

"Will a politician talk?" cried Furlong with savage joy. "I'd sign a life contract selling ice cream cones to Esquimaux for just five minutes of liberty in this tent."

"Softly, Mr. Grumbo," said the stranger. "I don't calculate to serve no summons at a coroner's inquest so we'll have to call the deal off. Sorry, Mr. Grumbo, for somehow there's an

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appeal to me in the tangle of your hair."

Furlong saw that his revenge must be postponed if he desired liberty from this unexpected source and after a short monologue in which he vowed ardently the indefinite postponement of his day of reckoning, the stranger was once more persuaded to resume negotiations.

The upshot of the whole matter was that Furlong was given a grudging liberty by the show in which he had proved such an attraction and forthwith entered the employ of the mysterious Mr. Jakeson.

A few days later a handsome car drove through the main streets of the small town of Centerfield and drew up grandly in front of the post office. In place of the tonneau there had been fitted up a speaker's stand proudly

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decked with American flags and a small tank-like structure that might have been the curtain of a bathtub shower. One man sat in the driver's seat; another had mounted the rostrum.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” commenced the orator clearing his throat and including in this introduction a half dozen loafers and a small colored girl on the side walk. “It is my great pleasure this evening to present for your entertainment my esteemed friend and comrade, the world famous cornet soloist, Prof. Terry Trumpet. He has set more crowned feet to dancing than any other tooter on this broad earth.”

The musician who had arisen and taken his position on the stand at this introduction smiled bashfully, placed a golden instrument to his lips and, in the

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manner of ancient heralds, wound blithely forth a volume of music that awoke the echoes. In a few moments he reaped his reward. People commenced to collect as if by magic. Scarcely had the last note died into silence when a crowd that would have aroused jealousy in an accident victim, presented a sea of upturned and expectant faces.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” commenced the orator as soon as the music ceased. “It becomes my great pleasure this evening in the cause of suffering humanity to introduce myself, Professor Jake J. Jakeson of Troy, New York and the marvelous remedy which bounteous nature has yielded to my years of toil. This is no cure-all, ladies and gentlemen, that I bring to you; this is a specific for the one most tender and painful of all ills. No longer need the shiny thought-domes of our most hon-

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ored citizens be the target for the jests of their friends and the peanuts of the small boy. The contents of this bottle, ladies and gentlemen, will grow hair on an egg, fur on a door handle, and a hirsute jungle on a senatorial dome.

“Would you believe it, my friends, when I had finished my experiments with some of the concentrated extract, I spilled a bottle upon the leather center piece on the table and spent the next morning explaining to my wife where I had purchased the bear-skin rug.”

The professor paused for breath and noticed with gratification the skeptical grins sprinkled among his audience.

“But that is not all, ladies and gentlemen. I do not vouch for the following story, although a friend of mine, whose veracity I have no reason to

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question, related the experience which he claims to have witnessed with his own eyes. He had bought a dog,—an Irish setter—of which he became very proud. One day while out hunting he had the misfortune to mistake the dog's tail for a rabbit and blazed away. A few moments later the setter, an exceptionally faithful and intelligent animal, hastened up with the tail in his mouth, having retrieved his own adornment.

“But this is not the point. My friend was naturally grieved at the occurrence, but with rare presence of mind pulled forth from his pocket a bottle of Jakeson's Hair Tonic, applied a few drops to the pitiful stump where the tail had been accustomed to wave, and, behold! there appeared a brand new appendage handsomer than the one he had shot away.”

This modern Ananias beamed with

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professional pride upon the attentive crowd.

“But that, amazing as it may seem, was eclipsed by the event that followed. My friend, surprised at the power of the tonic, tried a few drops upon the tail which the setter had retrieved and, believe it or not, a new dog hastily grew from the stump.”

A gasp went up from the astonished audience, and a few commenced to cry, “Fake! Fake!” This was apparently what the professor had been awaiting and now his voice became more serious.

“I am sorry to hear,” said he, “that a few among your number seem to doubt the words that I have spoken. If I have exaggerated it is because my heart and soul are in my work. I have witnessed the marvels that the tonic has accomplished and my deepest desire is to spread its beneficent power

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among mankind. I am willing here and now to put my words to the test.

“I have in my hands a bottle of the concentrated tonic, identical with that with which my friend produced the marvel upon his dog. If any man among you whose head now resembles the hairless surface of a china saucer will kindly step forward, I will apply this magic lotion to his unshingled roof, and ask him to enter this curtained cabinet at my side for three minutes. At the end of that time, ladies and gentlemen, I guarantee, or forfeit five hundred dollars on the spot, that he will step forth again with a harvest of hay upon his barren pasture that would make a football player look like a tonsured monk.”

While he had been firing this challenge at the astonished audience, the professor had unearthed a pile of green

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herbage from his coat pocket and had stacked it upon the rostrum.

“Don’t hesitate, my friends,” he rambled on. “This is no fake or your worthy magistrate here in the front row would soon have me where I could speak no more. Step right up. What gentleman is willing to bet his two feet of face against half a thousand dollars and this little bottle of magic fluid?”

For a few moments there ensued an awkward pause. The “hair-raising” statements of the tonic king had silenced the last mutterings of the people. There was a ripple of excitement among the crowd. Business could wait. Here was a marvel.

While the professor was berating the crowd for its lack of sportsmanship, there arose a sudden sound of cheers and laughter. A champion for the people had appeared.

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“You can’t shove no such stuff as that over on me,” said the stranger forcing himself through the amused throng. “This here sun-baked farm of mine has been irrigated by every kind of hair tonic made and there ain’t been a spear of grass show up yet. Lead me to it.”

The newcomer was clothed in raiment that shouted loudly of the farm, but there were no wisps of hay in his hair for he had no hair to hold them. In his company the average church deacon would have felt like a French poodle beside an oyster. Not a single hair appeared in the desert that extended from his neck up. A fly, landing in the middle of that amazing Sahara, would have walked for inches without encountering the oasis of a single hair. The crowd, craning forward to view the wonder, winked at one another and prepared for sport.

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“This is hardly fair,” said the professor evidently disturbed at the magnitude of his task. “My tonic sometimes fails to work on billiard balls. However, we shall do our best.”

Accepting the challenge with these words, the professor commenced to rub his lotion over the barren dome of the farmer and then, to complete his work, gently massaged the face of the stranger.

“And now, my friend,” said he, surveying his victim anxiously, “If you should return home at once and go to bed, you would have to present letters of introduction to your family in the morning. However, as we can not wait that long for action, I must ask you to step into the cabinet where my assistant will perform a secret process that speeds up the action of the tonic. As the method is extraordinarily dan-

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gerous, I have never revealed it to the public. One slight error on the user's part would turn his hair a vivid, unextinguishable green."

The farmer timidly entered the cabinet and for the required three minutes the professor entertained the expectant people with fervid panegyrics of doubtful veracity.

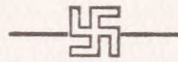
Finally the suspense reached the breaking point.

"Bring out the jay," "Let's lamp the hairless wonder," "Three minutes are up," and various cries of a similar nature displayed the anxiety of the crowd.

The professor called to his assistant; there was a muffled response and the next moment the curtain of the cabinet was thrown aside. The crowd gasped with awe and admiration. The

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farmer stood before them with a face
and head that looked like a scene on the
upper Amazon.



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Not until a delegation of prominent citizens had made investigation would the amazed people believe that the hair was real. The farmer appeared to be as surprised as the rest and his bucolic intellect seemed unable to detach itself from the thought of Mandy's joy when she should first look upon the fur-lined features of her spouse.

Immediately a wild demand for the marvelous fluid ensued and while the professor was dispensing his wares in dollar packages to the hairless, the farmer forced his way through the crowd and sauntered happily down the street.

He had not gone far when a cry behind him attracted his attention.

"Oh, Mr. Furlong, I am so anxious to see you."

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The farmer whirled around in sharp amazement and then stood as if stunned.

“Janet,” he cried.

“Oh, Jeffry, I’m so glad that I have found you,” said the young lady with joyful face. “I have the strangest confession to make. Do come right home with me. We’ve moved from Clipperville, you know.”

Furlong did not know, but he kept his ignorance to himself and accepted without reluctance the invitation of the young lady. A few moments later they were seated in a comfortable parlor.

“I knew you at once, Jeffry,” said Janet joyfully, “for no one else could grow a beard like yours. That bald-headed farmer was a trick, wasn’t he?”

“Yes,” admitted Furlong with a grin. “He went into the professor’s

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cabinet and I came out. We both wore similar suits and, being the same height, didn't have much trouble pulling the trick. The professor has planned such a nice little show that it's really too bad to show up the scene shifters."

"I just knew it all the time," continued Janet, "and I was so happy to see your lovely whiskers again. I've got a terrible confession to make to you, Jeffry."

Jeffry expressed his surprise and anticipation.

"You remember that night when I handed you a note telling you to go to the deserted house? Well, that was all the part of a horrible scheme which my uncle confessed to at his death a month ago."

"Ah," said Furlong.

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“My uncle and his associates planned to get control of your razor factory, but to do so they had to find a way to send you out of the country far from this neighborhood,” continued Janet. “They hired a wicked hobo to burn your house in the woods and then made plans to have you mistaken for an anarchist and deported to Russia. This would give them sufficient time for their wretched scheme. They thought that you would come to our house to hide and knowing that I wouldn’t recognize you with your whiskers, made me promise to give you that note. You were to go to the deserted house where officers had been stationed to smoke you out. The scheme failed somehow, however, for they captured the wrong man and you got away.”

“Lucky Pete,” murmured the razor king.

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“And now, Jeffry, I’m so sorry for what I said to you that night. I didn’t mean it, but my uncle said—.”

We are unable to report at this time what the bad uncle had said for the words were suddenly smothered in a tangle of shaggy beard.

Furlong for some reason prolonged his visit for several hours. Then he slowly arose and sought his hat. Janet accompanied him to the door.

“Jeffry,” she said wistfully. “I wish you’d promise me one little thing before you go.”

“One thing?” said Furlong with fine scorn. “Make it a hundred.”

“But just one is all I want,” affirmed Janet. “If you really don’t mind I wish you’d only have your whiskers trimmed a little bit. They’re so becoming and besides they’re all the

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rage now, and besides, you know that horrid Miss Pollykins—well, she's been bragging about that tiny, little mustache that her Tom has been trying to grow and I want to show her some really, truly whiskers."

Furlong sighed and promised. The next moment—or several thereafter—the door slammed shut and the razor king sought the gate. His thoughts were in heaven and his feet in the clouds when he suddenly turned a corner into a poorly lighted street and found himself surrounded by a threatening mob.

"Grab him," yelled a youthful voice and in a moment he was grabbed.

"Where's that razor?" asked a second voice. "We'll teach old Fuzzy to try to spoil athletics in this college. Somebody hold his feet."

Furlong squirmed and tried to ex-

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postulate, but all in vain. The band of youths had set upon him with deadly purpose. In a short time the job was finished and with a final flourish the last wisp of beard fluttered to the sidewalk.

“Hully gee,” cried one of the boys in consternation. “We’ve made a mistake. It isn’t old Fuzzy at all. We’d better play we’re snow and drift.”

Furlong scrambled to his feet and gazed thoughtfully at the apparent remains of a hair mattress upon the sidewalk.

“I’m sorry for Janet’s sake,” said he. “But it’s nearly time I met my face again when you consider that I’ve averaged nearly one close shave an hour recently.”

END OF THE TRAGEDY.

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